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LETTER DATED 21 JUNE 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF GERMANY TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to draw to your attention a statement dated 18 June 1999 by the Presidency of the European Union on the arms trade to and within the Great Lakes Region (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Dieter KASTRUP
Permanent Representative

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Annex

[Original: English and French]

Statement dated 18 June 1999 by the Presidency of the European Union on the arms trade to and within the Great Lakes Regions

The European Union is particularly concerned by the continuing flow of arms and military equipment of all kinds, in some cases together with military and technical personnel, which is fuelling conflicts in the Great Lakes and Central Africa region, as well as in other parts of the continent.

This flow, especially when it goes to non-State entities, which are often among the main actors in those conflicts, is mostly financed through the trafficking of diamonds, gold and other precious materials, as well as through other lucrative illicit activities.

The EU is committed to supporting the capacities of regional and subregional organizations in Africa in the fields of conflict resolution and peacekeeping and, bearing in mind Security Council resolution 1209 (1998) on arms flows in Africa, considers that, in the search for a long-term solution to conflicts, high priority should be given to measures which curb arms supplies, their illicit circulation and the illicit trafficking which finances them.

In this respect, the EU recalls its Code of Conduct on Arms Exports of 8 June 1998 and underlines its determination to strictly implement it. Member States will have particular regard to criteria 3 and 4 of the EU Code of Conduct. In this regard member States will not allow exports which would provoke or prolong armed conflicts or aggravate existing tensions or conflicts in the country of final destination. Furthermore, member States will not issue an export licence if there is a clear risk that the intended recipient would use the proposed export aggressively against another country or to assert a territorial claim by force.

Member States will continue to apply these and other relevant criteria in a rigorous fashion not only until a ceasefire agreement is concluded, but until peace is re-established.

The EU also recalls the recommendations made by the United Nations regarding the flow of arms in the Great Lakes Region and Central Africa and the obligation of respecting the decisions of the United Nations on arms exports to the region.

Considering the magnitude of the diverse origins of military equipment brought to Africa, the Union will promote dialogue and cooperation on the matter with external partners, including all the countries involved in arms trade to and within the region. In order to address the problem of arms flow in the Great Lakes and Central Africa region, this dialogue shall in particular be sought with countries involved directly or through their nationals in the manufacturing or marketing of military equipment.

In this respect, the EU recalls its Joint Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons of 17 December 1998 as well as the EU Programme for Preventing and Combating Illicit Trafficking in Conventional Arms. It is the EU's intention to develop a dialogue and promote cooperation in this regard with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and other regional and subregional organizations. The EU wishes to collaborate closely with competent intergovernmental bodies in the region to enhance the effectiveness of combating such trafficking and is prepared to extend technical cooperation towards this end, as well as to consider the setting up of relevant bilateral working groups. In this framework particular efforts should be made in the areas of exchange of information, weapons collection and demobilization programmes, and measures to enhance cooperation among customs, intelligence and other law enforcement agencies.

The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union, the associated country Cyprus and the countries of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with the present statement.